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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes information about the 100 women and 53 men over 35 years of age who entered the University of Washington as undergraduates between spring 1970 and autumn 1971. The information was provided by the participants on a biographic survey that was administered at the same time as the Washington Pre-College Test Battery. High school background and early family life, prior education and vocational/educational goals, community and employment activities are covered in addition to current major, class, and academic status. Attention is directed throughout to differences between the sexes of which the most noteworthy findings appear to be the higher secondary school performance and lower aspirations of the females in the sample. (Author/HS)

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Descriptive Information on Over-35  
Undergraduate Students

Virginia de Wolf and Patricia W. Lunneborg

This report summarizes information about the 100 women and 53 men over 35 years of age who entered the University as undergraduates between spring 1970 and autumn 1971 as provided by them on a biographic survey when they took the Washington Pre-College Test Battery. High school background and early family life, prior education and vocational/educational goals, community and employment activities are covered in addition to current major, class, and academic status. Attention is directed throughout to differences between the sexes of which the most noteworthy findings appear to be the higher secondary school performance and lower aspirations of the females in the sample.

Bureau of Testing Project: 139

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## Descriptive Information on Over-35 Undergraduate Students

Virginia de Wolf and Patricia W. Lunneborg

An increasing number of older students can be seen on college campuses today especially at the undergraduate level. Yet there exist few studies indicating why this is so and, more importantly, there are few resources geared to this age group for guidance purposes. Realizing the usefulness of the Washington Pre-College (WPC) test battery to the high school student, Olch, Lunneborg and de Wolf (1972) gathered WPC data from a sample of undergraduates (UG's) over 35 years old to establish norms for future older undergraduate students at the University.

With funding provided by the Graduate School Research Fund, letters were sent all (550) new and returning UG's over 35 attending the University from spring quarter 1970 to autumn 1971. For their participation in the project, i.e., taking the Long Form B WPC test battery and completing a biographic form, the students were offered a sum of money ranging from \$5.00 to \$10.00 and a private counseling session with Dr. Doris Olch at which time feedback from their performance on the WPC was given. Fifty-three males and 100 females participated in this study during the seven quarters mentioned above. Half of the participants have taken advantage of the feedback session with Dr. Olch (53% of the males and 49% of the females). The present report summarizes descriptive information from the biographic form.

High school background and early family life. Information for the topics of this section was taken from both transcripts and the biographic form. The majority of over 35s were high school graduates. All the women were graduates and only eight males indicated that they had received an equivalency diploma. An item inquiring as to estimated high school GPA prompted the following breakdown indicating that the women had been quite superior academically to the men.

Table 1: Estimated HS GPA

|            | Males | Females | Total |
|------------|-------|---------|-------|
|            | %     | %       | %     |
| Below 2.50 | 40.0  | 14.0    | 21.5  |
| 2.50 -2.99 | 31.5  | 24.4    | 26.4  |
| 3.00 -4.00 | 28.5  | 61.6    | 52.1  |
| Total N    | 35    | 86      | 121   |

Concerning high school accomplishments eight areas of achievement were inquired of, e.g., "belonged to honor society." Seventy percent of females reported having one or more such achievement, while 57% of the males reported likewise.

Table 2: Number of HS Accomplishments

|           | Males | Females | Total |
|-----------|-------|---------|-------|
|           | %     | %       | %     |
| None      | 43.4  | 30.0    | 34.6  |
| 1         | 26.4  | 23.0    | 24.2  |
| 2 or more | 30.2  | 47.0    | 41.2  |

The top three areas for the males in HS were (1) winning a varsity letter in sports, 38%, (2) having a major part in a play, 28%, and (3) being president of one or more student organizations, 24%. For the females, the top three were (1) having a major part in a play, 34%, (2) belonging to a scholastic honor society, 29%, and (3) president of one or more student organizations, 28%. It is worthwhile to note that only 3 of the males belonged to a scholastic honor society, while 29 of the females reported such membership. This is consistent with the high school grades reported above.

Family background was rather similar for men and women. They both seemed to have spent their childhoods growing up in similar areas.

Table 3: Primary Area of Residence During Childhood\*

|                              | Males | Females | Total |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                              | %     | %       | %     |
| Large city (500,000 or more) | 20.8  | 29.0    | 26.1  |
| City (under 500,000)         | 32.1  | 28.0    | 29.4  |
| Suburb                       | 11.3  | 8.0     | 9.2   |
| Town                         | 32.1  | 31.0    | 31.0  |
| Farm or Ranch                | 18.9  | 18.0    | 18.3  |

\*Some people indicated multiple areas of childhood residency and the percentages reflect this fact.

(1956)

Utilizing Roe's/ classification of occupations, there was a great deal of correspondence in parental occupations for males and females. Table 4 presents father's occupation by Roe interest groups and levels. Technology employed the highest percentage of fathers for both sexes. The majority of fathers also had "middle level" Roe jobs, i.e., levels 3 and 4.

Occupation "Housewife" employed the highest percentage of their mothers--48% of males' mothers and 47% of the females. For those whose mothers did work Organization employed the largest percentage of the males' mothers, while Service and General Cultural tied for the position of employing the largest number of the females' mothers. The females' mothers seemed to have a slightly greater percentage of "higher level" jobs, i.e., levels 1 and 2, 20.0% when compared with the corresponding combined percentage for the males' mothers, 14.6%. At the other end of the scale, the males' mothers had a slightly greater percentage of level 5 and 6 jobs, 18.8% compared to the females' mothers, 13.7%.

Table 4: Father's Occupation by Roe Groups and Levels

|                        | Males | Females | Total |
|------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                        | %     | %       | %     |
| Groups                 |       |         |       |
| Service                | 6.3   | 8.6     | 7.8   |
| Business contact       | 10.4  | 4.3     | 6.4   |
| Organization           | 2.5   | 24.8    | 20.5  |
| Technology             | 47.9  | 38.7    | 41.8  |
| Outdoor                | 16.7  | 17.2    | 17.0  |
| Science                | 4.2   | 1.1     | 2.1   |
| General Cultural       | --    | 4.3     | 2.8   |
| Arts and Entertainment | 2.1   | 1.1     | 1.4   |
| Levels                 |       |         |       |
| 1                      | --    | 3.2     | 2.1   |
| 2                      | 8.3   | 6.5     | 7.1   |
| 3                      | 31.3  | 37.6    | 35.5  |
| 4                      | 37.5  | 33.3    | 34.8  |
| 5                      | 10.4  | 6.5     | 7.8   |
| 6                      | 10.4  | 6.5     | 7.8   |
| Unspecified            | 2.1   | 6.5     | 4.9   |

General profile of participants. The average age in 1971 was 42 for the males and 43 for the females. Fifty eight percent resided in suburbs or in a nearby town rather than within Seattle (42%). Seventy percent were within a half-hour's traveling time from the University and 81% drove to campus. A large percentage of the male students were veterans (79%), while only 3% of female students were veterans. Eighteen percent considered the financing of their college education of "major concern," i.e., they were not certain that they would be able to complete school, and 41% said finances were "somewhat" of concern. Money was no problem to 41% and there were no apparent differences in this regard between the sexes.

The students were asked to rate themselves on a scale from 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor) in general physical and mental health. Fifty-two % reported their physical health to be very good, 78% reported their health as either very good or good combined, and 99% said their health was very good to average. On mental health, with 1 as "happy and well-adjusted" and 5 as "very nervous, worried, having problems getting along with others," 41% reported their mental health to be very good, 75% reported it to be either very good or good, and 98% reported it to be either very good, good, or average. Eight percent reported physical handicaps and 14% indicated having a chronic illness.

Almost all of the students had had some college experience before being tested. Only four reported never having attended college.

Table 5: Previous College Experience

|                                | Males | Females | Total |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                                | %     | %       | %     |
| No colleges attended           | 1.9   | 3.1     | 2.7   |
| Junior or Community College    | 23.1  | 25.8    | 24.8  |
| 4-year College or University   | 55.8  | 37.1    | 43.6  |
| JC or CC and 4-year University | 19.2  | 34.0    | 28.9  |
| Total N                        | 52    | 97      | 149   |

Not only had almost all attended a college, university, or 2-year school, but three-quarters of them reported being juniors or seniors at time of testing. Table 6 presents the class status of each sex at time of testing.

Table 6: Class at Time of Testing

|           | Males | Females | Total |
|-----------|-------|---------|-------|
|           | %     | %       | %     |
| Freshman  | 7.7   | 8.2     | 8.1   |
| Sophomore | 13.5  | 17.5    | 16.1  |
| Junior    | 50.0  | 57.7    | 55.0  |
| Senior    | 28.8  | 16.5    | 20.8  |
| Total N   | 52    | 97      | 149   |

A list of 5 "non-vocational" reasons for coming to college was included on the biographic form. About 55% of the male students and 39% of the females did not indicate any such non-vocational reasons.

Table 7: Non-Vocational Reasons for Attending College\*

|                                                                                             | Males | Females | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                                                                                             | %     | %       | %     |
| To grow intellectually and personally                                                       | 37.7  | 51.0    | 46.4  |
| To provide enrichment of leisure time                                                       | 1.9   | 19.0    | 13.1  |
| To provide "insurance in case the need arises in the future to support myself or my family" | 11.3  | 35.0    | 26.8  |
| To develop special skills needed for volunteer work                                         | 1.9   | 6.0     | 4.6   |

\*Subjects free to choose as many of the categories as they wished.

The majority of the students were married or remarried as opposed to being either widowed, divorced, separated or single.

Table 8: Marital Status

|           | Males | Females | Total |
|-----------|-------|---------|-------|
|           | %     | %       | %     |
| Single    | 11.3  | 9.0     | 9.8   |
| Widowed   | --    | 3.0     | 2.0   |
| Divorced  | 5.7   | 10.0    | 8.5   |
| Married   | 67.9  | 65.0    | 66.0  |
| Separated | 1.9   | 6.0     | 4.6   |
| Remarried | 13.2  | 7.0     | 9.2   |

Table 9 presents the various sources of income for their education checked by students, many of whom gave more than one source.

Table 9: Sources of Financial Support

|                | Males | Females | Overall |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|
|                | %     | %       | %       |
| Part-time job  | 20.7  | 11.0    | 14.4    |
| Full-time job  | 35.8  | 13.0    | 20.9    |
| Spouse         | 34.0  | 67.0    | 55.6    |
| Other relative | --    | 4.0     | 2.6     |
| Savings        | 43.4  | 23.0    | 30.1    |
| Scholarship    | 9.4   | 8.0     | 8.5     |
| GI Bill        | 47.2  | 2.0     | 17.6    |
| Employer       | 3.8   | 3.0     | 3.3     |

While women were more dependent upon their spouse for support, men were supported by full-time employment or savings or the GI Bill.

The majority of these students had participated in one or more activities or civic, social, religious, or philanthropic organizations

since high school. Eighty-nine percent of the females and 68% of the males recorded such activities. Of these students, 62% of the females indicated that they had played a leadership role in one or more of the activities, for example, officer or chairman of an important committee, while only 50% of the males indicated this. Religious activities were the most frequently reported activity for females, while for the men civic and social activities dominated. Both groups reported that religious activities were the ones in which they were most often leaders.

Table 10: Participation in One or More Activities or Organizations since High School

|               | Males | Females | Total |
|---------------|-------|---------|-------|
|               | %     | %       | %     |
| Civic         | 37.7  | 59.0    | 51.6  |
| Social        | 37.7  | 57.0    | 50.3  |
| Religious     | 34.0  | 61.0    | 51.6  |
| Philanthropic | 21.8  | 51.0    | 40.5  |

Table 11: One or More Leadership Positions since High School

|               | Males | Females | Total |
|---------------|-------|---------|-------|
|               | %     | %       | %     |
| Civic         | 17.0  | 31.0    | 24.8  |
| Social        | 11.3  | 26.0    | 20.9  |
| Religious     | 18.9  | 31.0    | 26.8  |
| Philanthropic | 13.2  | 6.0     | 8.5   |

About 89% of the students participating in this project are or were married. The spouses of the female students were more highly educated

than the spouses of the male students. Female students reported that 61% of their husbands had a college or postgraduate degree and that 86% of their husbands had at least some college. In contrast, only 31% of the men's wives had college degrees and 63.1% of their spouses had some college work. Also not surprising are the higher job levels of male spouses. Fifty-seven percent of the husbands of the female students had jobs in levels 1 or 2, while only 30% of the male students' wives had jobs in that range.

The females in this group seemed to average more children, about 3 per woman, than male students, 2.5 per man. Eight percent of the women reported having 1 or no children while 26% of the men had one or no children. There was a tendency for women to have fewer children remaining at home. For the 75 women having 1 or more children living at home, childcare was considered a problem by only 4%. About 29% considered childcare to be somewhat of a serious problem, but the majority (67%) indicated that it was no problem at all.

The provisions for childcare given by these women were varied. About 29% didn't list any provisions so it can be assumed that their children living at home were old enough to take care of themselves. Of the remainder, reliance on other family members was the chief childcare resource. Only 9% used baby sitters and only 2 mentioned a daycare center.

Academic profile. As of winter quarter 1972 the majors of the students were as follows.

Table 12: Majors as of Winter 1972

|                           | Males | Females | Total |
|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                           | %     | %       | %     |
| Business                  | 37.7  | 9.0     | 19.0  |
| Natural sciences          | 7.5   | 9.0     | 8.5   |
| Humanities                | 20.8  | 39.0    | 32.7  |
| Social sciences           | 15.1  | 17.0    | 16.3  |
| Pre-major                 | 9.4   | 21.0    | 17.0  |
| Arch and Engineering      | 9.4   | --      | 3.3   |
| Other A & S and Education | --    | 5.0     | 3.3   |

Business-related majors drew the largest percentage of the male students, while the humanities major was the most popular among females students.

Grade transcripts provided academic standing and most recent cumulative GPA. Academic standings (Table 13) were in good standing (graduated or in school), dropped, probation (also "low" or "reinstated on probation") and officially withdrawn. The most recent cumulative GPA is reported in Table 14. As with the high school GPA, a higher percentage of females had GPA's in the 3.00-4.00 range: almost 44% of the females fell within this range, while 27% of the males did.

Table 13: Most Recent Academic Standing while at UW

|                  | Males | Females | Total |
|------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                  | %     | %       | %     |
| In good standing | 83.0  | 86.0    | 85.0  |
| Dropped          | 1.9   | 4.0     | 3.3   |
| Probation        | 7.5   | 2.0     | 3.9   |
| Withdrawn        | 7.5   | 8.0     | 7.8   |
| Total N          | 53    | 100     | 153   |

Table 14: Most Recent UW GPA Groupings

|             | Males | Females | Total |
|-------------|-------|---------|-------|
|             | %     | %       | %     |
| Below 2.50  | 36.5  | 23.5    | 28.0  |
| 2.50 - 2.99 | 36.5  | 32.7    | 34.0  |
| 3.00 - 4.00 | 27.0  | 43.8    | 38.0  |
| Total N     | 52    | 98      | 150   |

Over 50% of each sex expected to go beyond the B.A. degree. About 69% of the males anticipated getting a master's degree, doctoral degree or professional degree while 54% of the females hoped to receive an advanced degree. Table 15 reports these data.

Table 15: Highest Degree Hoped For

|                     | Males | Females | Total |
|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                     | %     | %       | %     |
| None                | 1.9   | --      | .7    |
| Bachelor's degree   | 28.8  | 45.9    | 40.0  |
| Master's degree     | 53.8  | 48.0    | 50.0  |
| Doctoral degree     | 9.6   | 2.0     | 4.7   |
| Professional degree | 5.8   | 4.1     | 4.7   |
| Total N             | 52    | 98      | 150   |

When asked about the number of years expected to receive the B.A., the men indicated it would take them fewer years than the females. Thirty-nine percent of males and 13% of females reported 1 year or less to complete their studies. Seventy-five percent of the males and 54% of the females expected to complete their B.A. within 2 years, and 86% of the males and 83% of the females expected to finish in three years. During the quarter in which they were tested 71% of the males planned to carry 13 or more credits and 48% of them reported doing so. In contrast, 37% of the females planned to carry 13 or more credits while only 31% reported doing so. Thus, one obvious reason for women planning to take longer is their lighter course load. Table 16 presents data as to the expectations of the sexes in regard to succeeding in college.

Table 16: What is the best guess as to the chances that you will do the following?

|                            | Good<br>Chance |      | Some<br>Chance |      | Little<br>Chance |      | No<br>Chance |      | N   | %   |
|----------------------------|----------------|------|----------------|------|------------------|------|--------------|------|-----|-----|
| Males                      | N              | %    | N              | %    | N                | %    | N            | %    |     |     |
| Obtain an A Cumulative GPA | --             | --   | 10             | 20.0 | 11               | 22.0 | 29           | 58.0 | 50  | 100 |
| Obtain a B cumulative GPA  | 27             | 51.9 | 16             | 30.8 | 6                | 11.5 | 3            | 5.8  | 52  | 100 |
| Change major field         | 5              | 11.4 | 15             | 34.1 | 18               | 40.9 | 6            | 13.6 | 44  | 100 |
| Change career choice       | 3              | 6.7  | 17             | 37.8 | 16               | 35.6 | 9            | 20.0 | 45  | 100 |
| Drop out temporarily       | 3              | 6.1  | 9              | 18.4 | 19               | 38.8 | 18           | 36.7 | 49  | 100 |
| Drop out permanently       | 1              | 2.1  | 3              | 6.3  | 20               | 41.7 | 24           | 50.0 | 48  | 100 |
| Transfer to other college  | 1              | 2.1  | 7              | 14.6 | 22               | 45.8 | 18           | 37.5 | 48  | 100 |
| Females                    |                |      |                |      |                  |      |              |      |     |     |
| Obtain an A Cumulative GPA | 2              | 2.3  | 17             | 19.5 | 33               | 37.9 | 35           | 40.2 | 87  | 100 |
| Obtain a B cumulative GPA  | 62             | 66.0 | 22             | 23.4 | 7                | 7.4  | 3            | 3.2  | 94  | 100 |
| Change major field         | 7              | 7.8  | 34             | 37.8 | 27               | 30.0 | 22           | 24.2 | 90  | 100 |
| Change career choice       | 8              | 8.6  | 37             | 39.8 | 31               | 33.3 | 17           | 18.3 | 93  | 100 |
| Drop out temporarily       | 4              | 4.6  | 26             | 29.9 | 39               | 44.8 | 18           | 20.7 | 87  | 100 |
| Drop out permanently       | 1              | 1.1  | 4              | 4.5  | 42               | 47.7 | 41           | 46.6 | 88  | 100 |
| Transfer to other college  | 4              | 4.4  | 11             | 12.1 | 41               | 45.1 | 35           | 38.5 | 91  | 100 |
| Total                      |                |      |                |      |                  |      |              |      |     |     |
| Obtain an A Cumulative GPA | 2              | 1.5  | 27             | 19.7 | 44               | 32.1 | 64           | 46.7 | 137 | 100 |
| Obtain a B cumulative GPA  | 89             | 61.0 | 38             | 26.0 | 13               | 8.9  | 6            | 4.1  | 146 | 100 |
| Change major field         | 12             | 9.0  | 49             | 36.6 | 45               | 33.6 | 28           | 20.9 | 134 | 100 |
| Change career choice       | 11             | 8.0  | 54             | 39.1 | 47               | 34.1 | 26           | 18.8 | 138 | 100 |
| Drop out temporarily       | 7              | 5.1  | 35             | 25.7 | 58               | 42.6 | 36           | 26.5 | 136 | 100 |
| Drop out permanently       | 2              | 1.5  | 7              | 5.1  | 62               | 45.6 | 65           | 47.8 | 136 | 100 |
| Transfer to other college  | 5              | 3.6  | 18             | 12.9 | 63               | 45.3 | 53           | 38.1 | 139 | 100 |

Vocational information. The students were requested to list a brief job history. Although some were not employed the quarter in which they were tested, most everyone listed a specific occupation either their job at present or their most recent job before unemployment. Tables 17 and 18 give the Roe groups and levels, respectively, of this "most recent job." The men seemed to have been employed most recently in jobs which correspond with higher Roe levels. Sixty-two percent of them indicated jobs in levels 1, 2, and 3, while only 35% of the women held jobs in this bracket. Examining the other end of the Roe spectrum 30% of the men had jobs in levels 4, 5, or 6, and yet 59% of the women indicated that their most recent job was here.

Table 17: Roe Group of Most Recent Job

|                        | Male |      | Female |      |   |
|------------------------|------|------|--------|------|---|
|                        | N    | %    | N      | %    |   |
| Service                | 4    | 8.7  | 8      | 8.6  | 1 |
| Business Contact       | 4    | 8.7  | 4      | 4.3  | 2 |
| Organization           | 14   | 30.4 | 50     | 53.8 | 3 |
| Technology             | 22   | 47.8 | 8      | 8.6  | 4 |
| Outdoor                | --   | --   | 1      | 1.1  | 5 |
| Science                | --   | --   | 8      | 8.6  | 6 |
| General Cultural       | --   | --   | 10     | 10.8 |   |
| Arts and Entertainment | 2    | 4.3  | 4      | 4.3  |   |
| Total N                | 46   |      | 93     |      |   |

Table 18: Roe Level of Most Recent Job

| Male |      | Female |      |
|------|------|--------|------|
| N    | %    | N      | %    |
| --   | --   | 3      | 3.2  |
| 9    | 19.6 | 13     | 14.0 |
| 23   | 50.0 | 21     | 22.6 |
| 10   | 21.7 | 38     | 40.9 |
| 2    | 4.3  | 18     | 19.4 |
| 2    | 4.3  | --     | --   |
| 46   |      | 93     |      |

Very few persons indicated that they were being sent to the U for additional education or retraining by an employer--only 8% of males and 3% of females. And when asked "If you did not work for a significant period of time and were not in school, indicate what you were doing during that time," 64% of the women gave a response and only 11% of the men did. The activity occupying this time for almost all of these women was childcare or housewifery.

They were asked their vocational goal after completing their education. Only 58% entered responses which could be categorized. The most frequent choice of both males and females was a future job in General Cultural. Fifty-one percent of the males and 45% of the females stated that their vocational goal would be an advancement in a field in which they are or had been working. Twenty-eight of the 53 males and 54 of the 100 females gave specific jobs both for "most recent job" and "vocational goal" so the Roe levels of these jobs could be compared. Job level of vocational goal was greater than the level of the "most recent job" in the majority of these instances.

Table 19: Vocational Goal by  
Roe Group

|                           | Male |      | Female |      | Total |      |
|---------------------------|------|------|--------|------|-------|------|
|                           | N    | %    | N      | %    | N     | %    |
| Service                   | --   | --   | 11     | 18.6 | 11    | 12.4 |
| Business Contact          | 2    | 6.7  | --     | --   | 2     | 2.2  |
| Organization              | 10   | 33.3 | 6      | 10.2 | 16    | 18.0 |
| Technology                | 6    | 20.0 | 2      | 3.4  | 8     | 9.0  |
| Outdoor                   | --   | --   | 1      | 1.7  | 1     | 1.1  |
| Science                   | 1    | 3.3  | 7      | 11.9 | 8     | 9.0  |
| General Cultural          | 11   | 36.7 | 28     | 47.6 | 39    | 43.8 |
| Arts and<br>Entertainment | --   | --   | 4      | 5.8  | 4     | 4.5  |
| Total N                   | 30   |      | 59     |      | 89    |      |

Table 20: Vocational Goal  
by Roe Level

|  | Male |    | Female |      | Total |      |
|--|------|----|--------|------|-------|------|
|  | N    | %  | N      | %    | N     | %    |
|  | 1    | 3  | 4      | 6.8  | 7     | 7.9  |
|  | 2    | 19 | 45     | 76.5 | 64    | 71.9 |
|  | 3    | 7  | 10     | 16.9 | 17    | 19.1 |
|  | 4    | 1  | --     | --   | 1     | 1.1  |
|  | 5    | -- | --     | --   | --    | --   |
|  | 6    | -- | --     | --   | --    | --   |
|  | 30   |    | 59     |      | 89    |      |

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